

**DEVON & SEVERN  
INSHORE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

**Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee  
held on 8 November 2016 at Larkbeare House, Exeter**

**Present:** Elaine Hayes (Chair)  
Cllr Jim Knight (Devon)  
Cllr Stuart Hughes (Devon)  
John Butterwith  
David Rowe  
Mike Williams  
Simon Pollentine  
Andrew Knights (NE)

**Also Present:** Tim Robbins (Chief Officer)  
Hazel Mitchell (DSIFCA)  
Karlien Bond (DCC)  
Angela Stirland (DCC)  
Peter Lappin (DCC)  
Simon Excell (Gloucestershire)  
Phil Higginbottom (Somerset)  
Kaja Curry (Plymouth)

**Apologies:** Cllr Terry Napper (Somerset)

This meeting was arranged to discuss the setting of the budget for 2017/18 to be put to the main Authority for approval at the quarterly meeting on 9 December 2016. A paper showing itemised details for a proposed budget of £716,900 was put to the Committee for discussion. Cuts have been taken to reduce an increase in the budget to a minimum to incorporate the decision to recruit 1 new enforcement officer in April 2017 and review the recruitment of a further officer in September 2017. The proposed budget and levy for 2017/18 represents an increase in the budget of 3.42%. The D&S IFCA are conscious and aware that funding Authorities are all suffering financial restraints, but it was considered the risk of infractions, judicial review with potential costs to funding Authorities any further reduction in the budget figure for not employing the extra enforcement officer could seriously affect the IFCA from carrying out its statutory duties.

Detailed budget at Appendix A and additional information were discussed in detail and the following issues noted.

**Employees**

- **Line 1, Staff Costs** - Comment should be made that this includes the cost of the new Enforcement Officer
- In September 2017 the review to recruit a second enforcement officer will be undertaken. As this appointment needs approval by the main Authority no provision

can be made in the budget. If agreed the post will be funded from any underspend in the secondments budget with any shortfall being met from the General Reserve.

## Supplies

- **Line 23, AIFCA** – Concerns over the amount being paid to the AIFCA instigated a lengthy discussion. A letter to all IFCA Committees (copy of which will be distributed to all members at the December 2016 meeting) from the AIFCA emphasizes the need for the D&S IFCA to seek agreement from its members to ensure the full membership fee of £12,000 is paid over for 2017/18. The D&S IFCA was the only IFCA to reduce its contribution by £2,000 for 2016/17. The Chair responded to this letter by email asking for her concerns of lack of accountability, lack of transparency, absence of a business plan and lack of outcomes rather than just outputs be addressed before consideration of paying over the full annual amount was reviewed. The Chair has yet to receive a response to her concerns.

The Committee decided to talk in detail of the options for the way forward with the consideration to either remain or withdraw from the AIFCA, ultimately to be made by the full Authority. The Chief Officer informed members that money earmarked to pay for an Association or to pay for somebody to talk to DEFRA on behalf of the IFCA is not ring fenced, that it is not a legal requirement to be part of the Association but someone must be available to talk to DEFRA. Cllr Knight feels that the topic of membership of the AIFCA has been aired several times and that they have already been given notice last year to respond to questions asked without delivery and considered that attendance by the IFCA directly to DEFRA would be more beneficial in obtaining first-hand information on items discussed.

Mike Williams believes that any correspondence/discussion with AIFCA should include DEFRA, for them to be aware that there is a strong probability, if agreed by the full Authority, that the D&S IFCA will leave the AIFCA in 12 months' time unless the concerns and issues raised are not satisfied. This provides a timetable with thresholds required showing the seriousness of the situation and that membership will be reviewed in light of any progress or achievements of these thresholds having been met within this period.

An options paper to be put to the main Authority in December for them to decide a way forward with the AIFCA membership, specifically to address how the D&S IFCA view the AIFCA and if the value we place on that versus the cost was recommended. It will incorporate the strengths and weaknesses of proposing to withdraw but to include an understanding of what the alternatives are. To realise that if withdrawal is made that a substitutional cost will be incurred as the Chief Officer and his team will have to attend meetings in London.

As a compromise the consensus that to withhold payment for next year's membership until evidence that measures to address the concerns already raised by the D&S IFCA are met was favoured.

David Rowe considered that another opportunity for the AIFCA to be invited to attend a quarterly meeting to convince the members that we need to belong to the Association should be sent out. After the Authority has a chance to discuss the paper at the December meeting it could be sent to the AIFCA and DEFRA in the New Year for the chance for AIFCA to reply to the issues raised in the paper.

A request by the Committee for the Chair to ring DEFRA to make them aware of what the D&S IFCA are proposing to gauge their feelings was asked.

A recommendation by the Committee to the full Authority that payment is withheld for 2017/18 from the AIFCA until such time as they come forward with the evidence to give the D&S IFCA the confidence that their contribution is being well spent was proposed.

Proposed: Cllr Jim Knight

Seconded: Cllr Stuart Hughes

All in favour, none against

- **Line 24, Other Memberships** – Description required
- **Line 32, Subscriptions** – Description required
- **Line 30, Officers Subsistence** – The amount of £600 to be relocated to line 11 (Public Transport) as this is related to the extra costs incurred by the new enforcement officer.

#### **Boat Costs**

- **Line 34, Moorings/Berths** – Comment should advise figure includes allowance for 2<sup>nd</sup> mooring for new vessel

#### **Fees & Charges**

- **Line 48, Permit Fees** – wording of ‘bi-annually’ should read ‘biennially’
- **Paragraph 4** – Made aware that no increase in fees for staff or the Rib Charter has been made for several years and it was agreed that this cost should be increased by the rate of inflation for this budget and subsequent ones.

#### **Capital Programme**

- The capital programme for 2017/18 centres around the purchase of a new patrol vessel costing around £250,000. With the assumption of gaining EMFF grant funding of 90% the balance of £25,000 would need to be taken from General Reserves. An asterisked comment to explain where the grant funding was potentially coming from was requested.
- The Committee decided to take out the capital programme projection tables for 2018/19 and 2019/20 from the paper as they could be misconstrued and not actually reflect true replacement timing.
- The creation of an Asset Register with an annual paper of the condition and life forecast of assets should be produced to incorporate an options appraisal to gauge when and how replacement may be envisaged. A paragraph within paragraph 6 to advise the Authority members that future planning of asset items will be reviewed annually when actual and current information is relevant.

Subject to the amendments and actions required above a block vote of the following recommendations was made:

- 1.1 Consider the Revenue Budget outlined in the paper provided and recommend its approval to the Authority.
- 1.2 Consider the Capital Programme outlined in the paper provided and recommend its approval to the Authority.
- 1.3 Recommend to the Authority the approval of the Fees and Charges set out in the paper provided.
- 1.4 Review the Assessment of Volatile Budgets at Appendix B and recommend to the Authority that the risks, impacts and mitigations be noted.
- 1.5 Recommend to the Authority that the projected balances on the General Reserve and Capital Receipts Reserve are noted.

Proposed: Cllr Jim Knight

Seconded: Mike Williams

All in favour

None against